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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHUJA #0694/01 1061517
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 151517Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2596
INFO RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE
RUEBAAA/AMCONSUL LAGOS 9080
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000694

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STATE FOR INR/AA, AF/W
DOE FOR GPERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2033
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [KIRF](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NORTHERN ROUNDUP FOR JAN-APR 2008

REF: A. 07 ABUJA 1626
[1](#)B. 07 ABUJA 2579

Classified By: PolCouns Walter Pflaumer, reasons 1.4 (b & d).

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is a roundup of recent socio-political developments across northern Nigeria, including:
-- Adamawa Guber Candidate Uses "Jihad" to Rally Support
-- Kano Hisbah Attempts to Enforce Sharia in Non-Muslim Areas
-- Christian-Muslim Violence in Kano
-- One Killed, Five Churches Burnt in Bauchi

[1](#)2. (SBU) ADAMAWA GUBER CANDIDATE USES "JIHAD" TO RALLY SUPPORT: Adamawa state gubernatorial aspirant, Murtala Nyako (People's Democratic Party - PDP), allegedly endorsed pamphlets characterizing his bid for governor a "jihad" and calling on supporters to come out en masse when polls open April 26. The pamphlets have been distributed across Yola, the capital city. (Note: The North-Eastern state of Adamawa is roughly 50% Christian and 50% Muslim. Obviously, statements depicting the gubernatorial contest between Nyako and his opponents as a "jihad" (or struggle) may inflame inter-religious tensions. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (U) KANO HISBAH ATTEMPTS TO ENFORCE SHARIA IN NON-MUSLIM AREAS: Nigerian press reported March 3 the Kano hisbah authority (commonly known as the Sharia police) had entered the Sabon Gari neighborhood January 17, allegedly to confiscate alcohol and crack down on prostitution in that predominantly non-Muslim area of Kano metropolis. Sanusi Ali, Legal Director of the Hisbah Board, sent a letter to the Hoteliers and Other Liquor License Holders Association of Kano, affirming the hisbah's authority to operate throughout the state. The Association responded that the Nigerian Constitution, which permits the sale of alcohol and the practice of prostitution, superseded the hisbah's mandate. Disagreements between the Kano Hisbah authority and the Nigerian government surfaced in 2006, when the latter accused the Kano government of undermining the national police force through the establishment of the hisbah. (Note: When the hisbah had first been instituted in Kano in 2003, Governor Ibrahim Shekarau had attempted to allay fears that the hisbah would enforce Sharia strictures against public consumption of alcohol and prostitution in non-Muslim areas, private residences, or commercial establishments. However, increasingly, and particularly as the hisbah's authority remains discretionary, perceptions the hisbah may be over-stepping its otherwise circumscribed authority appear

pervasive among businessmen, Christian leaders, and human rights activists (Ref A). End Note.)

¶4. (C) Comment: While the hisbah are also present in other northern states, including Niger, Bauchi, and Katsina, the Kano hisbah appear far more active in non-Muslim areas than their counterparts, in part due to likely pandering by governor Shekarau to his constituents' desire for more widespread implementation of the Sharia across Kano, and for the governor's own desire to cast himself as a more committed proponent of Sharia enforcement in the North. It was, after all, on the banner of Sharia, that Shekarau was elected in 2003. End Comment.

¶5. (U) CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM VIOLENCE IN KANO: Violence erupted February 8 in the Sumalia area of Kano state, approximately 25 miles from Kano's capital city. Reportedly, a protest organized after Friday prayers by Muslim secondary school students, who alleged a Christian fellow student had made insulting remarks against Muslims and the Islamic faith, turned violent when Muslim students demanded the police hand over the Christian student who had sought refuge at the police station. A Divisional Police Officer was killed in the protest, after allegedly opening fire on the protesters and killing two. Twenty-five others were arrested. (Note: Sumalia had earlier been the site of violence between supporters of the All Nigeria People's Party and PDP during the November 17, 2007 Local Government Council elections in Kano state (Ref B). End Note.)

¶6. (U) ONE KILLED, FIVE CHURCHES BURNED IN BAUCHI: Five churches were burned February 2 in Yana, thirty miles outside Bauchi city. A police station and barracks were also razed,

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as rioters protested the alleged defamation of the Qur'an by a female Christian student. Police shot and killed a protester as well. Other press reports suggested the violence broke out after a "love affair" between a Christian woman and Muslim man ended, though provided no further details.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: A recent survey by the national Islamic organization, Jama'atul Nasril Islam, found that 80% of the inter-religious conflicts that have occurred in the North over the past ten years had either taken place at secondary schools or universities or had been instigated by students. Disagreements over the placement of mosques or churches in government secondary school premises or universities have often led aggrieved parties to violent protests. At the same time, clashes take place as individuals of different ethnic and tribal groups, who may also belong to different religious faiths, compete for scarce resources and inadequate employment opportunities.

¶8. (S//NF) Comment Cont'd: Neither the GON nor state governments in Bauchi, Kano, or other northern states have taken tangible, proactive steps toward addressing the issue of inter-religious violence at the secondary school or university levels. Often, they are reticent to admit such a problem actually exists. The Sultan of Sokoto, and the emirs of the thirteen emirates, have been brokers for peace for some time in the North, but that has not worked to assuage latent tensions particularly with the youth. End Comment.
SANDERS